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HISTORIC HOUSES OF LOS ANGELES.

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(Read Oct. 9, 1896.)

[First Paper]

The historic houses of Old Los Angeles have long since disappeared. The perishable material (adobe or sun-dried brick) of which they were constructed, combined with the necessity, as the town grew larger, of more commodious buildings on their sites hastened their demolition. The few houses of the Mexican era that remain, date their erection well along in the first half of the present century. The Pueblo de Nuestra Señora La Reyna de Los Angeles of the last century has disappeared from the face of the earth. It is doubtful whether even a fragment of the ruins of any one of the old houses of a century ago exists. Even the exact location of the old plaza on which they fronted is unknown and the narrow streets that led out from it have long since been obliterated. The Old Los Angeles of the 18th century with its adobe wall that fenced out alike the hostile Indian and the lowing herds has disappeared as completely as have the mud walls of the town that Romulus and Remus built by the Tiber three thousand years ago.

THE "CUARTEL VIEJO,"

The oldest house of historic note built in Los Angeles was the cuartel or guard house. Its erection was begun shortly after the founding of the pueblo; and it was completed about 1786. It was used as quarters for the guard of the king's soldiers stationed here to assist the colonists in defense against attacks of hostile Indians. The Old Cuartel was a square adobe structure with thick walls, small iron barred windows and a heavy tiled roof. It stood on the southeasterly side of the old plaza, nearly on the line of Marchessault street north of the Church, near Upper Main street. Its ruins were still extant at the time of the American conquest (1846.) After it ceased to be used for a cuartel it was turned into a carcél or prison. Its inmates in the later years of its history were not always malefactors. Sometimes it happened, in the political upheavals so frequent during the Mexican regime, that the victors in the revolution sent the leaders of the vanquished faction to jail. At such times the old cuartel became headquarters for statesmen out of a job. During the military despotism of Governor Victoria, in 1831, it is said that more than half a hundred of the leading citizens of Los Angeles, at one time or another, were incarcerated in the Pueblo Bastile. Alcalde Vicente Sanchez was the petty despot of the

Pueblo who carried out the tyrannical decrees of his master, Victoria. Among others who were imprisoned in the cuartel was Jose Maria Abila. Abila was proud, haughty and overbearing. He had incurred the hatred of both Victoria and Sanchez. Sanchez, under orders from Victoria, placed Abila in prison; and to humiliate him put him in irons. Abila brooded over the indignities inflicted upon him and meditated revenge. An insurrection begun at San Diego by Jose Antonio Carrillo, Stearns and others, who had been either imprisoned or exiled by Victoria, resulted in the capture of Los Angeles and the release of Victoria's prisoners. Alcalde Sanchez was chained up in the old cuartel.

Abila and some of the other released prisoners joined the revolutionists and marched out to meet Victoria, who was moving southward with an armed force to suppress the insurrection. The two forces met on the plains of Cahuenga, west of the Pueblo, at a place known as the Lomitas de la Cañada de Breita (Little hills of the Brea Cañon.) A combat ensued in which Abila of the Revolutionary party and Pacheco of the Governor's force were killed, and the Governor himself dangerously wounded. He was carried to the Mission San Gabriel, where next day he surrendered his office and was deported to Mexico. And thus an insurrection that had its inception among the prisoners of the old cuartel ended in revolution, bloodshed and the downfall of a military despot.

The Old Cuartel in the later '30s became too dilapidated for prison purposes and was allowed to go to ruins. Possibly the hateful memories of it that still cling to the minds of some of its former occupants may have hastened its decay. The Pueblo authorities were at times sorely perplexed to find safe quarters for the criminals and the politicians whom some suppressed revolution had thrown out of a job. At one time the Curatè's house was taken for a jail, at another the excess was sent to San Gabriel for confinement; and later on, an assorted batch of criminals and politicians was shipped to Santa Barbara to be placed in durance vile.

THE "NUEVO CUARTEL."

The New Cuartel was built about 1841 on the hill in the rear of what is now the St. Elmo Hotel. It was used by the Americans after the conquest for a guard house, while the troops were stationed at Old Fort Moore on Fort Hill. During the flush days of gold mining the Loma Cuartel was kept well filled with a hard lot of criminals. The building was a one roomed flat roofed adobe, without cells. Its soft adobe walls would not long have confined the desperadoes of the early '50s incarcerated in it, but for a simple yet very effective device that was quite efficacious in curbing their jail breaking proclivities. Across the long room extending from wall to wall was placed a heavy pine log. Into this at intervals of three or four feet were driven iron staples. To each of these a short chain was

attached. The chains were fastened to the shackles on the prisoners' legs. Thus each criminal was picketed out like a coopless chicken designed for the ax; and it might be added that the culprit like the chicken sometimes got it in the neck, when some vigilance committee delegated to itself the authority to regulate the morals of the town. There was caste among the criminals of the early '50s. Only the "gente de razon," (people of reason) Americans and Spanish—were allowed to occupy the "Loma Cuartel." The pariahs of Los Angeles society—the Indians and Mexican half breeds, were chained to logs outside, where unprotected by roof or wall, they were, through sunshine and storm—left to enjoy the glorious climate of California.

(The pioneer jail of Klamath County in 1855, was a huge live oak tree. Staples driven into the trunk with chains attached, secured the prisoners. Sentence to solitary confinement under the circumstances was not imposed in that county.)

In 1853 a new jail was built on what is now the site of the Phillips Block, northwest corner of North Spring and Franklin streets. The Cuartel on the hill was changed into a dwelling house. It was demolished when Beaudry graded down the hill on New High street.

THE "NUEVA IGLESIA."

The oldest building now occupied or used in our city is the Church of Our Lady of the Angels. It is probably the only building now in use that dates its erection in the Spanish era of our city's history. Its corner stone was laid in 1814, but just where is not known. Its location was changed to higher ground—its present site—in 1818. The great flood of 1815, when the waters of the river came up to the lower side of the old plaza probably necessitated the change. Although it is rather a modest and unpretentious structure it took four years to build it. The builders seemed to have been more willing to wait than to labor. The Pueblo colonists were poor in purse and chary of physical exertion. When their own means were exhausted they asked the Missions for aid. The contributions to the building fund were various in kind and somewhat incongruous in character.

San Miguel contributed 500 cattle, San Luis Obispo 200, Santa Barbara one barrel of brandy, San Diego two barrels of white wine, Purisima six mules and 200 cattle, San Gabriel two barrels of brandy, and San Fernando one. Bancroft says that "the citizens promptly converted the brandy into money, some of them drinking immense quantities in their zeal for the spiritual welfare of the town." The church was completed and formally dedicated, December 8, 1822. The church building was remodeled in 1861. The front which projected out into the street was by order of the City Council, cut back to the line of the side walk. The tiled roof was changed to a shingled one, and the tower altered. The Curate's house,

which was a small adobe building, was torn down and the present brick structure erected. The grounds on the north were enclosed and ornamented. The present building and its surroundings bear but little resemblance to the "Nueva Iglesia" (new church) that Padre Payeras labored so earnestly to complete seventy-five years ago. It was called the "New Church" to distinguish it from the first church or chapel built shortly after the founding of the Pueblo, which was located at the foot of the hill on what is now Buena Vista street.

THE CARRILLO HOUSE.

Of the historic dwelling houses of Los Angeles, the Carrillo house, that stood where the Pico House or National Hotel now stands, was the most noted in early days. June 21, 1821, Jose Antonio Carrillo petitioned the Comisionado for a house lot near the "new Temple which is being built for the benefit of our holy religion." The lot 40x60 varas (114x170 feet) was granted next day. This is the only record of a grant of a house lot made between 1786 and 1836—just one real estate transfer in fifty years.

When Lieut. Ord made his plan of the City of Los Angeles in 1849, he took as the initial point of his survey the northwest corner of Carrillo's house that stood on this lot. And his bearings from a point opposite that corner gave direction to the lines of our streets, and virtually to the plan of the city. The building was begun in 1822 and completed in 1825. It was the most pretentious and aristocratic residence in the Pueblo at that time. It fronted on the plaza and had wings extending back on Main street, and from its eastern end, to an adobe wall in the rear, thus inclosing a patio or inner court. Although but a one-story building its height gave it the appearance of a two story house. Its high gabled roof of red tiles and its white walls were a pleasing contrast to the prevailing clay colored fronts and the flat asphaltum roofs of the neighboring houses. For nearly half a century it stood a historic landmark of old Los Angeles. It was torn down in September 1869, and the Pico house erected on its site. Within the Old Carrillo house was held many a royal feast and revel, and within its walls too, was concocted many a political plot and intrigue; for its owner was a scheming politician as well as a right royal entertainer. In its spacious ball room many a gay assemblage gathered—the beauty and the chivalry of the Pueblo, and the tallow dips "shone o'er fair women and brave men" as they whirled through the giddy mazes of the dance. In this old historic house was held one of the most sumptuous and prolonged marriage feasts ever celebrated in Alta California. It was the celebration of the marriage of Pio Pico to Maria Ignacia Alvarado in 1834. Carrillo was a brother-in-law of Pico's (being married to Pico's sister.) The feasting and the dancing continued for eight days. All the aristocracy of the Southern country, and all the retainers of the houses of Pico and Carrillo from San Diego to Monterey, gathered to do honor to the nuptials.

Its builder, Jose Antonio Carrillo, during the Mexican era was the Warwick of California politics. He was not a king maker, but he did make and unmake governors. He was the leader in the revolution that deposed Governor Victoria. While representing California in the Mexican Congress he had his brother Carlos made Governor of the Territory. He plotted against Alvarado and was mainly instrumental in the overthrow of Micheltorena, which made his brother-in-law Pico, Governor. He was a man of great natural ability but wasted his talents in artifices and intrigues. He was never happier than when he was fomenting a plot or leading a revolution. He filled many civil offices in the department and was a military commander of no mean ability. With an inferior force poorly armed, he defeated Mervine at the battle of Dominguez Ranch, and by a well contrived stratagem frightened Stockton's forces away from San Pedro. He commanded a squadron of cavalry in the battles of Paso de Bartolo and La Mesa, and was one of the commissioners that negotiated the treaty of Cahuenga, which gave California to the United States. He was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1849. He was the ablest of the native born statesmen of California during the Mexican period. Many of the leading men of that era were born in Mexico or in Spain. Carrillo was born in San Diego, April 11, 1794. He died at Santa Barbara, April 25, 1862, aged 68 years.

THE DON ABEL STEARNS HOUSE.

Another house of historic note was the home of Don Abel Stearns. It stood on the site now occupied by the Baker Block. Stearns bought the lot in 1834. The house was erected between 1835 and 1838. It was probably several years in the course of erection, for in the days of poco tiempo, a house was not built in a day, nor yet in a year. It was a flat roofed one-story structure covering quite a considerable area. At the corner of Arcadia and Main streets, a wing extended out to the line of the sidewalk. At the southern end was a similar projection. The central part of the building stood back from the street twenty five or thirty feet and the space between it and the sidewalk was paved with cobble stones. In the rear was a large patio or court yard partially inclosed by projecting wings from the main building. The patio was an appurtenance of all the better class of California houses of early days. The lot extended through to Los Angeles street. The Arcadia Block covering the Los Angeles street front was erected in 1858. It was then the largest business block in the town and for fifteen years after was the business center of the city. Stearns' Hall in the second story of this block, was for many years the principal assembly room for social and political gatherings.

Stearns, although a man of quick temper and strong prejudices, was withal hospitable and generous to those he liked. He was a convivial and

genial entertainer. Within the walls of his rambling old adobe home the elite of the Angel City as well as the foreign guest were often right royally entertained. Here Commodore Ap. Catesby Jones of the United States Navy and his officers were lodged and entertained when the Commodore came to Los Angeles to meet Governor Micheltorena and apologize to him for capturing Monterey. Commodore Jones, under the impression that war had been declared between the United States and Mexico, sailed into Monterey and captured the Capital City, Oct 19, 1842. Finding he was mistaken he restored the city to the local authorities with an apology. Micheltorena the newly appointed Governor after a protracted stay in San Diego and Los Angeles, had taken up his line of march northward with his army of 300 cholos. He had reached a point near San Buenaventura when he heard of the capture of the capital. He fled back so precipitately that his camp equipage was scattered over the plains from Ventura to Los Angeles. After waiting three months for the Governor to come to Monterey, the Commodore was compelled to go to Los Angeles to find him and offer him his apologies in person. Peace and harmony restored, the civilities closed with a grand ball which was held in the only two story building at that time in Los Angeles—a building on the east side of the plaza in what is now Chinatown. This was probably Sanchez Hall which is thus described in the diary of an old pioneer writing in 1842. "We arrived in the Pueblo at 8 p. m. We had a couple of dances. There was one in Sanchez Hall, and the other in Stearns. Sanchez Hall is painted out in the most comical style with priests, bishops, saints, horses and other animals—the effect is really astonishing." Governor Micheltorena took the oath of office in the Sanchez Hall Dec. 31, 1842.

At the Stearns house occurred the famous flag episode of 1839, which came near precipitating a revolution. Prefect Cosme Peña, appointed by Governor Alvarado to keep the turbulent Angeleños in subjection, had established his headquarters in the house of Don Abel. In front of the house he had raised the flag of his prefecture and planted a cannon. Stearns with but little respect for the Mexican flag (he hated Mexico) used the flagstaff for a post to tie cattle to, that were designed for slaughter.

This desecration the patriotic young Angeleños resented; and while Peña was absent at San Pedro, a number of them gathered to pull down the flag; or as another account say, to sacrifice a bullock that was picketed to the flag pole as a peace offering to the outraged dignity of the cactus perched eagle of the Mexican flag. Peña on his return had the leaders arrested for sedition and obtained a guard of ten soldiers to protect his flag. The citizens petitioned the Ayuntamiento to ask him to remove the flag to the public building where it would be treated with more respect. Peña in a

rage resigned his office and left breathing vengeance against the Pueblo de Los Diablos—town of the devils. He reported his grievancies to Governor Alvarado at Monterey. The twenty patriotic citizens who signed the petition were fined \$5.00 each, and the members of the Ayuntamiento \$10.00 each, for their attempts to secure respect for the flag. Such were the uncertain rewards of patriotism in the turbulent days of '39. The Stearns house was demolished in 1876, and the Baker Block erected on its site.

HALL OF THE "AMIGOS DEL PAIS."

The first social hall or club house ever built on the Pacific Coast, was erected in Los Angeles in 1844. It was the hall of the Amigos del Pais. The Amigos del Pais (Friends of the Country) was a society or club made up of the leading citizens of the town, both native and foreign born. A lot 100 varas square, free of taxes, was granted the society by the Ayuntamiento. An adobe building was erected and fitted up with a dancing hall, reading room and card tables. The hall was dedicated by a grand ball and a number of social entertainments were held. The Amigos for a time enjoyed their social privileges, and the society flourished. But it was a time of revolutions and political disturbances. In time social amenities gave place to political animosities. Although the members were "Friends of the Country," they became enemies to one another. The society ran in debt. Its membership fell off. The building was finally put up at a lottery. Andres Pico drew the lucky number. The Amigos del Pais disbanded. Their sala (hall) in course of time became a vinateria (saloon) and afterwards it was "Los dos Amigos," the two friends—the friend behind the bar and the one in front of it.

THE ROUND HOUSE.

The old Round House was one of the landmarks of the city that for many years was pointed out to visitors, and the story of the purpose for which it was constructed varied with each narrator. There are but few historic associations connected with it and no mystery about the purpose for which it was built. It was built for a dwelling house in the later '40s by Roman Alexander, a French sailor, after a model he claimed to have seen on the coast of Africa. He married a native Californian woman, and for a time they lived in the house. It passed through various hands until it came into the possession of George Lehman who fitted up the grounds for a pleasure resort, and the building for a saloon. Of late years writers refer to the grounds as the Garden of Eden. Lehman named the resort the Garden of Paradise. The following extract from the Los Angeles Star of Oct. 2, 1858, gives an account of the opening of the resort:

THE GARDEN OF PARADISE.

"The handsome grounds of the Round House in the south part of

Main street have lately been fitted up as a public garden under the above rather high sounding title. In it are to be seen elegantly portrayed the primeval family—Adam and Eve—Cain and Abel, also the old serpent and the golden apples all according to the record. There is besides a frame work containing what are called flying horses for the amusement of children. A band of music stationed on the balcony of the house plays at intervals. The garden is tastefully laid out and is much frequented by citizens especially on Sundays "

The modern proprietor (Lehman) of the Garden of Paradise like Adam of old sinned, not however, by eating forbidden fruit, but by contracting debts he could not pay. He was driven out of Paradise, and with him went the primeval family, the old serpent and the golden apples, all of which is not "according to the record."

The Round House stood on the west side of Main street, below Third. The Main street front of the Garden is now occupied by the Pinney Block, the Pridham Block and new Turnverein Hall. The grounds extended through to Spring street. On the Spring street front, now covered by the Henne, Breed and Lankersheim Blocks, was a thick cactus hedge which barred entrance to the grounds from that street; and was more effective than a flaming sword in keeping bad boys away from the golden apples of the tree of knowledge. The original Round House was built of adobe, and was circular in form. Lehman, or some subsequent owner, inclosed it in a frame and weather-boarded it; and in so doing changed it to an octagonal building.

In the arbors and under the shade trees, and possibly beneath the spreading branches of the tree of knowledge itself in the Garden of Paradise, assembled the patriots of Los Angeles to celebrate the Centennial of our Nation's Independence, July 4, 1876. Hon. J. G. Eastman, then in his prime, delivered the oration—one of the most eloquent addresses ever delivered in the city. Twenty years ago, the Garden was well out in the suburbs and was classed as a suburban resort. The Round House was torn down in 1889, the Garden of Paradise had disappeared several years before.

There are other houses of historic note that have been the scenes of events in the history of our city and of our State—such as the Government House—the juzgado, the Abila House, Don Louis Vignes's Castle of Refuge, the First Court House, and others, but space forbids their description in this paper. These houses of the olden time are forgotten landmarks to all but a few old residents; and even in their memories they have the dim and uncertain outlines of something dreamed of but not seen.

ERRATA.

Page 10,	line 16,	read Coronel; for Caronel
" 28,	" 1,	read: who were founders of families.
" 30,	" 1,	" cuera blanca.
" 30, 31	" —	" Ruiz for Ruis.
" 36,	" 34,	" conquista for conquesta.
" 49,	" 34,	" rancheria for rancharia.
" 59,	" 5,	" those who are qualified, etc.
" 60,	" 12,	" part for past.
" 61,	" 18,	" fallacies for follaces.
" 62,	" 6,	" Señora for Soñora.
" 63,	" 24,	" clung for cling.
" 67,	" 37,	" says for say.